



EM Recovery NEWS FLASH

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Idaho Site Completes Cleanup with Help from Workers who Shipped Waste Decades Ago

IDAHO FALLS, Idaho – From the 1950s until the 1980s, workers at the former Rocky Flats Plant near Denver, Colo., sent hundreds of thousands of barrels and boxes of radioactive and hazardous waste to the Idaho National Laboratory (INL) for disposal both above and below ground. Now, some of those who sent the Cold War weapons waste to Idaho are helping identify the waste in pits dug up for the first time in more than 40 years.

Pit 9 is the most recently completed buried waste exhumation project at INL's Radioactive Waste Management Complex. About \$12 million in savings from the Idaho site's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act cleanup contributed to the project, which was completed several months ahead of schedule and millions of dollars under budget.

CH2M-WG Idaho (CWI), the primary cleanup contractor at the Idaho site, has been removing targeted waste from several areas of the 97-acre landfill since 2005. In all, 7,485 cubic meters of targeted waste from a combined area of 5.69 acres will be removed. An earthen cap will eventually cover the entire landfill.

Former Rocky Flats employees, now working in Idaho, are able to visually identify buried materials such as plutonium- and uranium-contaminated filters, plutonium-contaminated sludges that also contain solvents and oxidized (depleted) uranium. Excavating equipment, modified for worker protection, is used to uncover the waste. The targeted waste, which is a risk to the underlying aquifer, is then segregated, repackaged and sent to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in New Mexico for permanent disposal.

The Idaho site is using savings from the Pit 9 project to accelerate other buried waste remediation projects, which is steady work for the hundreds of employees associated with the cleanup. Completing such projects years in advance is a significant cost savings to taxpayers.



Top photo: A specially modified waste excavator was used to remove transuranic waste from Pit 9.

Bottom photo: A protective glove box allowed workers to sort through Pit 9 waste for repackaging.

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